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REVIEWS AND NOTES.

The Book of Wheat. By Peter Tracy Dondlinger, Ph.D. New York, 1908. pp. 369.

While this book is not primarily a statistical treatise it contains such an abundance of valuable statistics on the subject treated and on the whole so admirably illustrates the advantages of the statistical method as an aid to clearness and accuracy in scientific exposition that there seems abundant justification for mentioning it in these publications. The author tells the story of wheat in such an interesting and at the same time instructive manner that one finds the book easy to read and at times almost fascinating.

The book is a mine of information, carefully arranged and well indexed. An exhaustive bibliography, filling twenty-seven pages in small type, makes the work an excellent guide to the investigator in any of the numerous branches of the subject. In his treatment the author has followed the natural order by first describing the grain and plant and the conditions under which it is grown, including soil, climate, methods of cultivation, etc., and then taking up in turn each stage through which it passes from producer to consumer. Numerous illustrations are introduced to show the historical development from the most primitive stages of the many tools, machines, and appliances employed in this great industry.

Many points are brought out in this book that are a revelation to the reader. We have been so impressed by the great advances made in manufacturing and transportation during and since the Industrial Revolution that we forget that agriculture has also been revolutionized, and that in no line of human activity has there been a greater lightening of human labor by the application of mechanical contrivances. One illustration will suffice to bring this home to the reader. In 1830 it required on the average 2 hours and 32 minutes of human labor to harvest and thresh a bushel of wheat, and in 1896 by the use of the combined harvester 5.6 minutes, while "the entire time of human labor necessary to produce a bushel of wheat, including sowing, reaping, and threshing, fell from 3 hours and 3 minutes in 1830 to 10 minutes in 1896." No step in the emancipation of human beings from the burden of brutalizing toil has ever been more significant than this, for it must be remembered that the labor now performed is comparatively light and agreeable, call-

ing for intelligence and not mere physical endurance, and, furthermore, that it affords an ample reward in real wages.

The book will be found useful by farmers as well as students of economics, and is a welcome addition to a growing literature on practical economic subjects.

C. W. D.

NOTE ON THE POPULATION OF CHINA.

Many estimates have been made of the population of China, but until recently little of a definite or reliable nature has been known about the real numbers. There has been a growing feeling among statisticians, however, that most of the estimates are utterly unreliable, and that the figures usually given are unquestionably much too large. In view of the keen scientific interest in this question, as well as the practical importance that it has for the Western world, owing to the political and economic changes that have taken place during the past ten years in that part of Asia, it has seemed desirable to publish the latest available information in regard to this matter.

In the course of a somewhat extended correspondence with Professor W. F. Willcox, under date of Sept. 8, 1908, W. W. Rockhill, United States minister to China, makes the following observations, and submits the accompanying table in support of his views on this subject: "I am much pleased to learn that the conclusions reached by you concerning the probable population of China do not materially differ from mine. In fact, I think that they agree absolutely. According to my views, whatever the population of China was in 1842, it has not probably increased to any perceptible extent since then. I have shown that the estimates made by the Chinese, wherever Western observers have been able to look into them, should be reduced by half in many cases and in the others by, perhaps, a third. I know of no particular reason why the return of population made in 1812 should be preferred to any other, nor for that matter is there any reason for placing particular confidence in that of 1842. I have assumed that it was possibly in excess as much as 50 per cent. If I had to choose any one enumeration among those given in Chinese works, I would certainly take that of 1743 (see p. 663 of my pamphlet). I see no reason to believe that in the last half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth there was no increase in the population of the Empire, though probably not a very large one. I think that a number of reasons might be adduced for believing that the population of China increased during that time, though that of Japan, as you say, remained stationary during that